

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 17086

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: GW, SF, NATO, MPOL, PARM

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SUBJECT: FRG/SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS AN INCREASING

PROBLEM

REF: BONN 17009 AND PREVIOUS

1. THE RALL AFFAIR AND ITS AFTERMATH IS TAKING ANOTHER UGLY TURN THAT DIRECTLY THREATENS DEFMIN LEBER'S POSITION AND PRESENTS CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

2. THE GERMAN PRESS BROKE THE STORY OCTOBER 17 THAT THE NEXT ISSUE OF "DER SPIEGEL" WILL CONTAIN A COPY OF A LETTER IN WHICH SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR SOLE REPORTED TO HIS GOVERNMENT THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED RALL'S TRIP PERSONALLY WITH DEFMIN LEBER. THIS STORY FOLLOWS RALL'S FORCED RETIREMENT AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, LEBER'S REPORT TO SCHMIDT AND THE REST OF THE CABINET THAT HE HAD NOT KNOWN ANYTHING ABOUT RALL'S TRIP.

3. A SENIOR FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL HAS TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT THE LETTER FROM SOLE TO HIS GOVERNMENT IS GENUINE, AND THAT SOLE DID CLAIM TO HAVE SPOKEN TO LEBER ABOUT RALL'S TRIP. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS EVEN RECEIVED A COPY OF THE LETTER UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT STRONGLY SUGGEST A PLANNED OPERATION. HE ADDED THAT THE FRG HOPES SOUTH AFRICA WILL WITHDRAW ITS AMBASSADOR WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS BEFORE THE FRG MUST FORMALLY REQUEST HIS DEPARTURE.

4. THE FRG OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE WHOLE OPERATION AGAINST GERMAN-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS IS BEING CONDUCTED WITH SUCH PROFESSIONAL SKILL THAT IT APPEARS TO BE MANAGED BY SEASONED OPERATORS, PERHAPS EAST GERMAN. THE OPERATION APPEARS TO HAVE THE DOUBLE PURPOSE OF RUPTURING FRG RELATIONS WITH AFRICA (LIKE THE GUINEA OPERATION OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO) AND OF FORCING LEBER'S RESIGNATION. SUCH A RESIGNATION WOULD PRESENT CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WITH AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE DILEMMA; TO REPLACE LEBER WITH A STRONG DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD MEAN ALLIENATING THE SPD LEFT WING JUST BEFORE A NATIONAL ELECTION; TO REPLACE LEBER WITH A WEAK
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DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD RISK A BREAK WITH THE FDP AND WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS CONCERN AMONG THE ALLIES.

5. THE FRG PRESS SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 17 THAT AMBASSADOR SOLE WOULD MEET WITH FONOFF STATE SECRETARY GEHLHOFF AND THAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR "WOULD BE ENDED SOON."

6. THE PRESS SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS MAY INDICATE THAT THE FRG ASKED FOR SOLE'S RECALL. SCHMIDT MUST SUPPORT LEBER OR LOSE HIM, AND SCHMIDT WOULD MUCH RATHER LOSE THE AMBASSADOR, EVEN WITH THE CONSEQUENT FALLOUT, FOR THE REASONS CITED IN PARA 4.

HILLENBRAND

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